

Michigan Infant Dies from Perinatal Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Infection

A three-month-old infant died from acute HBV infection due to an error in reporting. After a review of provider and hospital records, it was determined that the infant's mother was chronically infected with HBV and tested hepatitis B surface antigen-positive (HBsAg-positive) during her pregnancy. Unfortunately, the test results were not reported from the laboratory to the local health department (LHD), and the provider inaccurately reported the mother's results as HBsAg-negative to the delivery hospital.

Since the information from the prenatal care provider indicated that the infant's mother was negative for HBV, the infant did not receive hepB vaccine or hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) as recommended for all infants born to HBsAg-positive women. The infant became ill at three months of age and died less than two weeks later due to fulminant HBV infection.

This tragedy illustrates the necessity that all laboratories and ordering physicians comply with Michigan law. It is absolutely critical that every HBsAg-positive result for pregnant women is reported to the LHD and to the delivery hospital.

What Happens to Infants Born to HBsAg-positive Women?

WITHOUT HepB vaccine or HBIG:

- 90% will be at risk for chronic infection
- 25% of those infected will die due to chronic liver disease

WITH HepB vaccine alone in a 3 or 4 dose series started at birth:

- 70% - 95% will be protected from getting HBV infection

WITH HepB vaccine and HBIG started at birth:

- 80% - 95% will be protected from getting HBV infection